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 Title: The Mission of the Church
 Text: John 20:19-25
 Theme: The mission of the Church is singular and is to glorify God by the making and maturing of disciples from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation.

Questions:

1. How important is it to identify the mission of the church? Is this mission singular or does the church have multiple "missions"?
2. Why does the church exist in this community? Is the presence of this church in the community important, relevant, necessary?
3. Is the glory of God and the salvation of man opposite ideas? Or does the one lead to the other?
4. Must every activity of the church compliment and carry out the mission of the church?
5. Can a church be biblical that is not engaged in an intentional manner of making disciples in their community, their nation, and their world?
6. How would I answer the question "Why do I attend church?"
7. Is my membership/commitment to this church important?

In our study this morning it is necessary for us to define some terms that will arise.

Defining Terms:

The Church of God - What is the Church of God? A gathered community of saved people who are committed 1) to one another, 2) to the leadership, 3) to the keeping of the New Testament teaching, and 4) to making and maturing disciples locally, nationally, and globally through the establishing and strengthening of local churches.

The Mission of God - What is the Mission of God? The mission of God is to secure for Himself worshippers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation by the making and maturing disciples through His church for the establishing and strengthening of local churches.

Missional/Incarnational - What is the Church of God incarnationally? It is the cultural adaptation of the good news in local communities by individuals in order to carry out a ministry of reconciliation between the unbelieving and God. This requires the church to be *in* the culture (Acts 15), *through* the culture (Acts 17), and *against* the culture (Acts 19).

As churches carry out the mission of God locally they become missional or incarnational in the expressing of the good news to lost sinners. Becoming missional takes place in all four stages of church planting: pre-evangelism, evangelism, discipleship, and the establishing and strengthening of local churches.

Scott Thomas of Acts 29 defines the missional church in the following manner.

“A missional church is a theologically-formed, Gospel-centered, Spirit-led fellowship who seeks to faithfully incarnate the purposes of Christ. The mission of the church is found in the mission of God who is calling the church to passionately participate in God’s redemptive mission in the world” (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). www.acts29network.org

Introduction:

The purpose of God for all things created is to glorify Himself. Creation, in all of its expressions, exists to bring Him glory. It is the means through which He is honored. In and through His church He has openly established a means of achieving this end. Matthew 28:18-20 is clear, as is John 20:21. The church is to go into all the world and make disciples of all people by becoming incarnational.

Mind: We must know that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost. He came to call sinners to repentance not the righteous.

Will: We must choose to be active in the redemption of the lost in our community, our nation, and our world.

Emotion: We must love the lost by loving our Lord Jesus and His Church.

In an article titled, “‘The 'Missional Church: A Model for Canadian Churches?’ David Horrox writes, ‘The traditional ways of evaluating 'successful churches’ – bigger buildings, more people, bigger budgets, larger ministerial staff, new and more programs to serve members – would be rejected. New yardsticks would be the norm: To what extent is our church a 'sent' community in which each believer is reaching out to his community? To what extent is our church impacting the community with a Christian message that challenges the values of our secular society?’ How are we as a community of faith fulfilling our Lord’s Mission? Let us seek to answer the question by asking five simple questions. First, “what is the mission of God?”

I. What is the Mission of God (Matt. 28:18-20)?

The Mission of God is to glorify Himself by making and maturing disciples who shout His supremacy in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tongue, tribe, people, and nation.

The mission of God comes from the very nature of a triune God.

[The Mission of God must be] understood as [coming] from the very nature of God. It [must be placed] in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on [The Mission of God] as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missio_dei

His mission is redemptive as He brings people into union with Himself.

[The Mission of God] correctly emphasizes that God is the initiator of His mission to redeem through the Church a special people for Himself from all of the peoples of the world. He sent His Son for this purpose and He sends the Church into the world with the message of the gospel for the same purpose. (Van Sanders, "The Mission of God and the Local Church," in *Pursuing the Mission of God in Church Planting*, ed. John M. Bailey, Alpharetta: North American Mission Board, 2006, 24.)

Where few would deny the mission of the church, many would struggle with the means whereby this is accomplished. How is God bringing to pass His redemptive purpose and how does this purpose reflect His nature?

II. Why is Discipleship the defining Mission of God (John 20:19-25)?

Discipleship is to make followers of Christ from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. As such it is to bring people into relationship with God. This is what discipleship does and this is why discipleship reflects the nature of God. God is a Tri-unity in perfect communion or fellowship one with another. This is why discipleship is a non-negotiable aspect of biblical Christianity. The two statements, discipleship and Christianity, are biblically synonymous. There is no such thing as a non-following disciple and there is no such thing as a non-disciple Christian.

The idea of Missions and Discipleship are inextricably linked. Consider how the term "missional" captures these two ideas into one thought.

"Jesus told us to go into all the world and be his ambassadors, but many churches today have inadvertently changed the "go and be" command to a "come and see" appeal. We have grown attached to buildings, programs, staff and a wide variety of goods and services designed to attract and entertain people.

"Missional is a helpful term used to describe what happens when you and I replace the "come to us" invitations with a "go to them" life. A life where "the way of Jesus" informs and radically transforms our existence to one wholly focused on sacrificially living for him and others and where we adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture. It speaks of the very nature of the Jesus follower." (Rick Meigs <http://friendofmissional.org/>)

III. What does discipleship, or biblical Christianity, look like?

Discipleship is always done in the context of an incarnational relationship. This incarnational relationship is currently called "missional." It is seen in John 20:21 where Jesus said, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." It is explained further in Philippians 2:5-8.

⁵ “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ **Being found in appearance as a man**, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

The relationship believers have to the world is to look like His life. His life is one of becoming like those He was reaching. It is this idea Paul captured in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

¹⁹ “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. ²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:19-27).

In verses 19-23 Paul describes how he became all things to all men in order that he might save some. In verses 24-27 Paul describes what this “cost” him. In the absence of self-denial, he would be disqualified from reaching the lost simply because he was putting his own needs and desires before that of the lost.

This will be a significant stretch for us, but if we do not change the way we are currently thinking we will fail in reaching our community. This is not simply something that is new or improved. The very idea of becoming incarnational or missional is at the heart of the New Testament community of faith. When we gather, you are to be instructed in the Word of God for the work of God. This instruction is a primary responsibility of the Elders and the Deacons are to make sure they stay on task. According to Ephesians 4, you the congregant are to be engaged in the “work of the ministry” which has earlier been defined as discipleship. That work is primarily outside the formal ministries of this building. Much of what we do as a fellowship is for the maintaining of the body. There is little done for the expansion of His body in the Waukesha Community.

Listen to Mark 2:16, 17.

¹⁶ “When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, ‘**Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?**’ ¹⁷ And hearing this, Jesus *said to them, ‘It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners**’ “ (Mark 2:16, 17).

We must not change what we are doing in order to better accommodate our needs, but we must change in order that we might become the Church of God in the Waukesha Community.

If we are calling sinners to repentance, confession, and community, then it is going to get messy. They are not going to come in their suits and ties. They will violate every known church protocol that currently exists, but we are here for them. Think of the Proverb.

“Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, But much revenue comes by the strength of the ox” (Prov. 14:4).

Think of the Gospels. When Jesus ministered directly to people to whom did He go? Who were the ones persistently opposing Him?

We must get past our current cultural taboos and move into the community and this will require getting dirty and being more transparent and accountable. As I have thought on these things, I believe we must view any culture through one of three lenses.

First, we must be *in* the culture. With the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, the church determined what aspects of Jewish culture could be embraced.

Second, we must work *through* the culture. In Acts 17 the apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill and used the culture to address his audience.

Finally, we must work *against* the culture. Paul did this in Acts 19 when he opposed the worship of Diana of Ephesus.

If we do not live in the culture, use what we can, and resist what we must, we will cease to be the body of Christ for lost sinners.

Consider the following 14 descriptions of a missional fellowship.

1. A missional church is one where people are exploring and rediscovering what it means to be Jesus' sent people as their identity and vocation.
2. A missional church is individuals willing and ready to be Christ's people in their own situation and place.

3. A missional church will be engaged with the culture (in the world) without being absorbed by the culture (not of the world).
4. A missional church is orthodox in its view of the gospel and scripture, but culturally relevant in its methods and practice so that it can engage the worldview of the hearers.
5. A missional church is evangelistic and faithfully proclaims the gospel through word *and* deed. Words alone are not sufficient; how the gospel is embodied in our community and service is as important as what we say.
6. A missional church will align all their activities around the mission of God.
7. A missional church practices hospitality by welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community.
8. A missional church will see themselves as representatives of Jesus and will do nothing to dishonor his name.
9. A missional church will be totally reliant on God in all it does. It will move beyond superficial faith to a life of supernatural living.
10. A missional church will be desperately dependent on prayer.
11. A missional church gathered will be for the purpose of worship, encouragement, supplemental teaching, training, and to seek God's presence and to be realigned with God's missionary purpose.
12. A missional church will feed deeply on the scriptures throughout the week.
13. A missional church will help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts and will rely on gifted people for ministry instead of talented people.
14. A missional church is a healing community where people carry each other's burdens and help restore gently. <http://friendofmissional.org/>

This is what Jesus Christ will look like in the Waukesha community.

IV. Why is it primarily in and through the local church?

The reason why we are placing emphasis on the local church is because the New Testament places emphasis on the local church. However, by way of clarification let us note two thoughts.

a. Primarily does not mean exclusively

No local church or para-church ministry can make an exclusive claim to truth. God is working not only through us but through all who claim the name of Christ.

b. Primarily does mean chiefly (1 Tim. 3:14-16).

Jesus Christ has a body and it is the local church. We would be foolish to dismiss the centrality of the local church in the community. We have neglected our role, but it is a role we must begin to shoulder.

¹⁴ “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, **which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.** ¹⁶ By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:14-16).

Local churches are the pillar and support of the truth. Local churches are the household of God. Local churches are the place of the living God. These three statements are in parallel. Again, lest we forget, the apostle is not saying the building or structure is these things, but the congregation of committed people who are identifiable and under the leadership of divinely appointed shepherds.

Listen to Albert Barnes on this passage.

His design here seems to be, to impress Timothy with a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in relation to the church; of the responsibility of those who presided over it; and of the necessity of care and caution in the selection of proper officers. To do this, he reminded him that the truth of God that revealed truth which he had given to save the world--was [entrusted] to the church; that it was designed to preserve it pure, to defend it, and to transmit it to future times; and that, therefore, every one to whom the administration of the affairs of the church was [entrusted], should engage in this duty with a deep conviction of his responsibility. (Albert Barnes' New Testament Commentary)

It would be a mishandling of the biblical text to simply dismiss the local church from the discussion of this text and see the “church” as only making reference to the church universal. As we consider the mission of God in the world, I believe we need to revisit our mission to the immediate community.

V. Where is relational discipleship to take place (“of all the nations”- Matt. 28:19)?

Although we continue to speak of “all the nations,” we still must become aggressive in our immediate and long-term approach to disciple making.

Mark Driscoll in his work Reformation speaks of three elements that must be present in every local church: the gospel, the church, and the culture. I find his comments insightful and highly appropriate to all local churches. He explains this with the following words:

The gospel is our love for the Lord. The church is our love for one another, and the culture is our love for our neighbor.

He goes on to explain what happens if any one of the three are missing.

- If you have the gospel and the culture without the church, you have a para-church ministry.
- If you have the gospel and the church without the culture, you have fundamentalism
- If you have the church and the culture without the gospel, you have liberalism.

Each one of those errors are present in our thinking. Some of you love the gospel and the culture, but you have a low opinion of and commitment to the church. Some of you love the gospel and the church, but have no desire to engage the culture. And some of you love the culture and the church, but have no love for God. It is only as these three elements are present that we have a healthy church.

a. Disciple-making in the community

We have been talking long enough without any real action. Now we must act.

b. Disciple-making in the Mid-west

We must align ourselves with an aggressive approach to church planting in the Mid-west.

c. Disciple-making in the world

And we must strengthen our commitment to church planting world-wide.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here? What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Take the membership classes at WBC and align yourself with God's mission through this local fellowship.
2. Join this church through membership.
3. Give your financial gifting primarily to this church for the expansion of kingdom work.
4. Pray regularly for the mission in and through WBC.
5. Become incarnational/missional in your immediate community. Who can you reach, what can you do that is Christian in your place of employment? How can you become the body in your community?